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RUSSIAN AGGRESSION IN THE EAST.

At the present time a brief sketch of Russian aggression in the East may be valuable and interesting. One of the great and secret designs of this mighty power has been to obtain by diplomacy—which, in her case, means cunning—a powerful influence in our India. No true policy guides her, no scruple is respected, no humanity is known. With exiles perishing on the Kuban, agents sapping the Porte, tyrants in every province, a war establishment in Bessarabia, spies and friends in every country in Europe, her designs are apparent. In sixty years she has advanced from the Don and the Volga to the Aras, and from the Aras her influence is felt in Afghanistan.

She respects not treaties. Her conquests are like the raging of the plague or the cholera. Her arms are like the pestilence or the hurricane; and when she makes peace, it is because there is a desert where millions lived. When the Romans advanced their eagles and arms, they spread a rude kind of civilisation, the hordes of Scythia became civilised by the races they conquered. The Russians destroy the very landmarks and signs of civilisation. They erect a dungeon here, a palace there; they have whips for the slavish, swords for the brave; they are without arts, learning, or literature, except a few borrowed lights.

When by art and cunning Russia made progress in Persia, it was by mingling Gothic with Oriental barbarism. Russia made Persia pay tribute. The English were wont to pay a subsidy to Persia. The government wanted to give up the practice, which in days gone by seems rather to have filled the pockets of worthless ministers than made its way to Persia. But the opportunity was now given to get rid of the impost. England engaged to pay the Shah's debt to Russia, if he would amend the article of the treaty by which they engaged to subsidise him, as well as that respecting the Russian frontier. He consented, though with an ill grace.

The public is aware of how near, by Russian influence, Persia was upon the verge of war with her Mussulman ally, Turkey. But the connexion of Russia with Persia is old. Peter sent an ambassador to the Shah, and then, under the usual pretence of aiding him against some rebels, occupied, and then seized several fine provinces of his kingdom. At the death of Peter, the fate of the state was all but sealed, and the ancient domains of the lofty dynasty were divided between the Affghans, the Turks, and the Tartar hordes of Moscow. Nadir Shah, however, arose, and though cruel and merciless, being possessed of energy and courage, drove out all the usurpers, and became ruler of the whole region to the foot of the Caucasus. But at his death the Russians again seized Georgia, and by a long career of cunning and secret intrigue, almost ruined Persia in the same way that they nearly ruined Turkey and kept back Greece.

England became uneasy. Judging from the past, we looked with dread to the future. We felt confidence in the strength of our Indian empire. But with the cabinet of St. Petersburg ruling in Teheran, in Kabul, and Kandahar, strange things might be expected to occur in the Punjab and the vale of Kashmeer. We had watched the little insignificant state of Muscovy, once unrecognised, now take a bold front in advance of nearly all nations, while it was quite easy to suppose that influence, which was paramount from the Volga to the Caspian, extending from the Caspian to the Indus.

From Sweden she had taken half her territory; from Poland, plains as vast as the whole Austrian empire; from Turkey in Europe, a slice as large as Prussia; from Turkey in Asia, as much as the Lesser Germanic Confederated States; from Persia, a territory as large as England; from Tartary, a space equal to Turkey in Europe, Greece, Spain, and Portugal. It was impossible, after this, not to mistrust and suspect Russia. There was no wavering sign in her history, no intimation that she would stop. Persia was utterly unable to check her.

In Afghanistan appeared a barrier. That country was always ruled by a usurper. Timur, son of Ahmed, was suc-

ceeded by Zeman Shah, a younger son, who blinded his brother, Humayan. He was deposed in the same way by another elder brother. Mahmoud, who succeeded him, was deposed by Sujah-ul-Mulk, who did not, however, blind the man he overthrew. But Mahmoud escaped from prison, dethroned Sujah, and sent him to the Punjab. Runjit Singh, king of the Five Rivers, welcomed him and robbed him. He appealed to the English, who protected him. Mahmoud had been successful through the ability and activity of his minister, Futteh Khan, whom he allowed to be hewn to pieces at the foot of the throne. His brothers rose in arms, were victorious, and divided Afghanistan among them. Mahmoud fled to Herat, where he died.

Dost Mahommed was the ablest of the brothers of Futteh Khan. He was a bold, bad, wicked man, and by unscrupulous means gained great power. But the country was devastated by civil war. Sujah meanwhile attacked him twice, and Runjit Singh seized upon Peshawar.

It was by this means that Russia hoped to carry out her designs upon the East, of which the possession of Constantinople is only a part. That the Czars have always had an eye on British India is undoubted. The idea is widely spread in Russia. It is the constant, daily, and hourly talk of the army; civil and military servants discuss it. Potemkin and others devised ingenious plans to bring it about, and for many years circumstances have been coming to light which leave no doubt on the minds of politicians and statesmen of the fact. The actual conquest of India by force of arms, and at once, could never have entered the head even of a Nicholas—because the difficulties are such as to be all but insurmountable—and without a powerful navy it could not be held. But she moves on slowly and assiduously to the attainment of her object. She tries to become to the populations of our north-west frontier in India what she is to the deluded Christians of Turkey. Her agents, spies, and friends seek to undermine our influence, and spread discontent. She wanted some provinces in Afghanistan, to give employment to those predatory hordes which compose her armies on the frontiers. Some notion of this kind must have incited her to claim dominion over some of those desolate tracts to the south of the Heavenly Mountains, where battalions of her army annually perish amid glaciers—bare and arid plains, adorned with sand-reeds, garlic, yellow jujube flowers—utterly worthless, in fact. But such plains and hills fill up space on the map of the world, and are therefore coveted by Russia.

We have seen the advances of the Czar through the wilderness to the borders of China; they form probably a long vista, with Peking at the end. So the tracts of Central Asia and the gullies of Afghanistan are but steps on the road to the ultimate conquest of British India. One mode of conquest was proposed through Khiva, up the Oxus, to Bokhara and the Balk, over the Hindu Kush to Kabul, then by Peshawar, to Attock, Lahore, and Delhi. It would be necessary to reduce Turkestan to subjection, and Kharism and Bokhara must be Russian provinces. But to carry an army over such a space is beyond the power of Russia, if we judge her from the past and present.

But still, though there be no immediate fear of an armed invasion of India, the designs of the Czar are well known and dangerous. Russia threatens, unless present events check him, to become undivided master of Persia. The Czar has spent millions to be paramount at Teheran. This once completely attained, an army might be pushed to the banks of the Indus, Afghanistan attacked, and our north-west frontier be continually assailed.

It will be seen from the above, that, extensive as are the designs of Russia in Turkey, they are not less so elsewhere. When we reflect upon what has been the universal policy of Russia in what she calls colonisation, but one hope can be expressed relative to the future Progress of Russia.*

* Sir John Macdonald: "Remarks on the Invasion of India." Sir John Malcolm; Thornton and Horace, St. John's British India. Wilson.